HELPED FRANK DISPOSE

OF MARY PHAGAN’S BODY

CONLEY NOW CONFESSES

Negro Sweeper Who Swore to Detectives That

He Wrote Murder Notes Found Near Dead

Girl's Body Now Admits His Complicity in

Case, According to Statements Which Have

Stirred Police Headquarters as Nothing

Since Murder.

LANFORD AND BEAVERS PLEASED

OVER RESULT OF GRILLING NEGRO,

THEY ANNOUNCE TO REPORTERS

Police and Detective Heads Refuse to Go Into

Details of Negro's Statement Or to Discuss

What He Said, But Declare That It Will Prove

a Big Factor in the Murder Case—Negro

Will Be Subjected to Another Third Degree

Today.

Dumbfounding his hearers with the confession that he had helped Leo M. Frank lower the lifeless body of Mary Phagan into the darkness of the pencil factory basement, James Conley, the negro sweeper, is authoritatively said to have made that astounding admission during a strenuous third degree at police headquarters late Thursday afternoon.

He is said to have minutely described the movements of himself and Frank as they packed the mutilated form from the office floor of the building down into the dark cellar, where it was left in the desolate recess in which it was discovered the following morning.

Saying he had found the girl stone dead when he entered the building at 1:15 o'clock with the suspected superintendent, he is declared to have admitted that he and Frank proceeded immediately to remove the corpse, silently and with utmost precaution, to its hiding place in the basement.

CONLEY ASKED NO QUESTIONS.

Through fear he states he did not ask his employer how the little girl met her death. He is said to have told the police that he asked no questions, carried out Frank's instructions to the letter, and departed directly after he emerged from the grewsome trip into the basement.

The girl's body was found, crumpled in a heap, gashed and distorted, secreted on the second floor, he is said to have confessed during the examination, when he arrived with Frank in the building. Frank said but few words, the negro is averred to have told, but helped to carry the corpse to its place of discovery beneath the factory.

As a result of the negro's confession, police headquarters is stirred as never since the murder. Both Chief Lanford and Chief Beavers declared to reporters that they were pleased even beyond expectation over the result of the Conley cross-examination. It was the most exacting of his entire imprisonment.

Although the source of The Constitution's information is substantial and authoritative, police officials refuse to discuss the negro's admission in detail. The police and detective chiefs will not commit themselves, and they neither deny nor affirm the information obtained by a Constitution reporter. The admission is said to have been made between 4:30 and 5 o'clock in the afternoon to Lanford, Beavers, Harry Scott, Secretary Febuary and Detective Pat Campbell.

Will Frank See the Negro?

A strong effort will be made today to confront the accused factory superintendent with Conley and his confession. Detectives who pin faith to the negro's story and believe Frank guilty, speculate upon the prisoner's unwillingness to face the sweeper. If he is not guilty, they say, he likely would not object to facing the negro. They say that it is damaging to his plea of innocence to refuse the negro an audience.

For four hours Thursday afternoon, Conley was subjected to the third degree. Newspaper reporters who usually hovered in convenient vicinity of the door leading to Chief Lanford's office, in which the examination was held, were "shooed" away and ordered to remain a good distance from the place.

The interrogation proceeded quietly, unlike the customary police third degree, in which loudness, abrupt orders and threats play prominent parts. Onlye a few hushed sounds sifted through the lattice work above the door. The entire third floor, where the detective department is situated, was redolent with the atmosphere of mystery.

Everybody seemed to feel the importance of the examination under way behind the locked doors of the chief's

office. Everybody tingled with expectation. It was in the very air, and even though it came with the suddenness of a lightning stroke, the rumor of Conley's confession did not carry with it the surprise it ordinarily would have carried.

Officials Are Greatly Pleased.

The examination over, the police chiefs, Harry Scott, the Pinkerton man, Secretary Febuary and Detective Campbell emerged with satisfied smiles overspreading their features. Conley, his fingers twitching nervously as though the handcuffs he wore were chafing his wrists, came out between Scott and Campbell. Sweat streamed from his brow, and he was plainly agitated.

He was removed to his cell in the prison downstairs. It was planned to subject him to a further interrogation at night, but this pathetic plea for sleep and rest prevailed, and he curled up on his cell bunk and was sound asleep by 8 o'clock. He will be again examined today, however. He slept well throughout the night; in fact, better than he has slept since having been put in prison, as though he were relieved of a burden by his confession.

Although they will not commit themselves, both Chief Lanford and Chief Beavers infer that Conley has made the long-sought admission. They say that the crisis they now allege they have reached is too great to imperil by talking for publication. All freely admit, however, that the most important admission of the mystery has been gained.

Chief Lanford declared to a Constitution reporter:

"I am more pleased with Conley's statement tonight than with any other phase of our investigation. The result of his examination has exceeded even our most hopeful expectations."

"Does Conley admit having seen Frank with the body or having been connected, himself, with its disposal?" he was asked.

"I cannot commit myself," was his reply. "I will tell all about it later. It would be damaging to talk at present. Otherwise I would be too glad to tell all I know."

Chief Beavers said:

"Right now we face a crisis in the Phagan case. It would be injurious to reveal the latest and most important developments. I would rather not discuss the report of Conley's confession. I cannot commit myself, but can say that what he has told is of extreme importance—more so than anything that has not yet developed.

Harry Scott, assistant superintendent of the Atlanta branch of the Pinkertons, who played a leading role in Conley's interrogation, said:

"Conley is talking, but it would be imprudent at this stage to tell what he is admitting. He continues to weave the web around Frank."

Conley was released from the chief's office at 6 o'clock. He is beginning to show the effects of imprisonment, and the incessant interrogation to which he is daily being subjected.

The detectives say that Conley explains his past silence regarding his part in the tragedy by saying that he expected to be given a large sum of money by Frank or Frank's friends.

When he changed his sworn confession it was to save his own neck, he is said to have stated. He was made vividly aware of the treacherous ground on which he was treading by the handwriting he had submitted, and it was in an effort to retrieve his error that he had altered his original affidavit.

He was made to give numerous specimens of his handwriting last night. New phrases of the murder notes were dictated and his writing, in each instance, compared perfectly with the original script of the murder notes. Each specimen [sic] of his handwriting is kept guardedly by the detectives.

Don't Think Conley Guilty.

Chief Lanford, Chief Beavers and Harry Scott last night again denied that they believed Conley guilty of the murder. The evidence is so strongly against Frank, they say, that it is difficult to vary from the original theory of the superintendent's guilt. The negro's story, said to have been told at the last examination, is so straightforward and coincides so perfectly with other phases that have already been brought out that it is said to be indisputable.

Frank Remains Calm.

Frank, in his cell at the Tower, is apparently unperturbed over the negro's many admissions. Jailers, turnkeys and Tower attaches, who are the only persons beside the prisoner's friends who are allowed to see him, say he maintains his characteristic good nature. His health is not falling, they say, and he eats heartily at each meal. He will make no expression regarding the crime of which he is accused to anyone connected with the jail, declining emphatically to discuss any angle of the mystery.

Conley was arrested, it will be remembered, on the same afternoon of Frank's arrest. He was discovered by Foreman E. F. Holloway while washing a shirt on the second floor of the factory structure. He was turned over to Detectives Coker and McGill, who rushed from police headquarters in answer to a telephone call from the foreman.

Said He Could Not Write.

He strongly denied until a week ago all knowledge of the crime. He even declared he was unable to write. It was Sunday, one week ago, that Detective Scott discovered the negro's ability to write. He was carried to the office of Chief Lanford and forced to produce specimens of his script.

Last Saturday he admitted having written the notes found beside the body. He stated, however, that they were written on Friday, the day preceding the murder. A day or so following he amended the first confession, admitting to detectives that the

notes had been written on the afternoon of Mary Phagan's death —even an hour after her disappearance.

Conley is a young negro, black and chunky, with an honest face. He is apparently in the twenties, and has been a laborer by profession. He is married, his wife visiting him daily at police headquarters. He had been in the employ of the pencil factory for several years.

He is said to have admitted last night that immediately following the carrying of Mary Phagan's body to the basement, he returned hurriedly to the first floor, emerging through the Forsyth street entrance, leaving Frank in the building. Whether or not he told of the broken lock on the back door of the cellar is not known.

Bit by bit the detectives have been worming from him his startling confession. Thursday afternoon, it is said, he was willing to talk, and once started on his narrative, continued through to the end with but little questioning to urge him onward.

It was stated by C. W. Tobie, the Burns agent, shortly before his departure from Atlanta, that his chief, the famous William J. Burns, will personally investigate the Phagan case. The Burns headquarters, in New York, were wired by The Constitution to verify the report. No reply has yet been received.

Factory Officials Accuse Him.

Three officials of the National Pencil company—Herbert G. Schiff, head bookkeeper; M. B. Darley, assistant superintendent, and E. F. Holloway, general foreman—have expressed their theory of the negro sweeper's guilt. Holloway was the man who telephoned police headquarters to have Conley arrested when he discovered the negro washing a shirt on the second floor of the factory building.

They state that the negro's admission of having written the notes is proof itself of his guilt, and that his story to the effect that they were dictated by Frank is absurd in every respect. Conley's penchant for falsehoods, as shown in his two affidavits—both

contradictory—are also offered as evidence of his guilt. Conley's statement that he was in the factory for several hours on the day of the tragedy shows strongly against him, they say.

Also, his denial of ability to write when first placed under arrest, and his subsequent display of ability to write, are brought out in the pencil factory official's theory of his guilt. Detective Harry Scott asserts, in rebuttal to this, that Conley's story is that he withheld his confession on account of anticipation of a large sum of money he says he expected from Frank or Frank's friends.

Final Proof, Says Lanford.

Chief Lanford and Scott announced Thursday that they considered the negro's final affidavit proof conclusive of the suspected superintendent's guilt, and were thereby ready to place the case on trial at any date set by the superior court, before which it will be tried some time during the latter part of next month.

They admit being puzzled, however, by certain discrepancies in matters of time, as explained in the negro's second affidavit, and which are contradicted by witnesses who testified before the coroner's jury. They expect, though, to clear up this condition by the cross-examination under which they placed the negro last night.